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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God of time and eternity, use our lawmakers today as instruments of Your will. Give them the wisdom to turn from every thought, word, and deed that weakens instead of strengthens. Lord, help them to desire to be people of integrity, individually and corporately. May this be a day when our Senators serve You with gladness because Your joy has filled their hearts.

Lord, all nations are Yours. Help us to trust You to rule our world.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEFF MERKLEY led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 3, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MERKLEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Last night, I filed cloture motions on two tax cut amendments. Those votes are expected to occur tomorrow. Senators will be notified when those votes are scheduled. I have not had the opportunity to meet today with the Republican leader. We will try to set up those votes at a convenient time tomorrow, as convenient as possible.

MIDDLE-CLASS TAX CUTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I had hoped we would be able to come to agreement with Republicans to hold votes today to protect middle-class families. But the Republican caucus would not agree, so we will have a series of votes tomorrow on the tax rates set to expire at the end of this month.

Democrats' priorities are clear. We are protecting middle-class families every way we can. Tomorrow's votes will show where Republican priorities are and where ours are. Those votes will clearly demonstrate who supports the middle class, and that includes every Senator.

The minority can spin any way they want what has taken place over the last 24 hours. They can pretend giving the rich tax breaks creates jobs, even though we know from the past decade that it does not. If that were the case, the economy would be booming, except

during the last years of the Bush administration, when those tax cuts were in effect, we lost 8 million jobs. They can pretend we can afford to give billionaires another handout, even though we know we can't. But no matter how many times you pretend, it doesn't make it true. The truth is simple: Holding middle-class tax cuts hostage for tax breaks for the wealthy that they don't need and we cannot afford is irresponsible.

A lot has been written about the letter that 42 Republican Senators sent me a couple days ago. Maybe it is news that they put it in writing, but that is all that is new about it because, as the Presiding Officer knows, everything we have tried to do legislatively this year has been stymied, stopped with filibusters, well more than 100. Republicans have been holding good legislation hostage for 4 years—important bills, non-controversial bills, every bill. That is why we have a lame duck session with such a long to-do list.

Interestingly, I heard one Republican Senator, my friend, the senior Senator from Tennessee, say: The majority leader fills the tree. They have had lots of opportunities to offer amendments. The problem is, it is not the offering of amendments. We will allow them to offer amendments, but they are not satisfied with that. They want the results. They are not willing to offer an amendment they may lose. They are only willing to offer amendments they want to win. If they don't win them, then they stop everything. That isn't the way it has been done around here, and it should not be done in the future that way.

Since they sent me that letter, a lot of focus has been on the political impact of this game. I am more interested in the impact on the people I represent than the political games being played.

When Republicans take their ball and go home, here is what happens: More than 83,000 Nevadans who are jobless and looking for work will lose their unemployment insurance over the next

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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